

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 4155

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, CI

SUBJECT: HUNGER STRIKE CONTINUES

REF: SANTIAGO 4130 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: WITH HUNGER STRIKE NOW IN ELEVENTH DAY CARDINAL SILVA HAS REPORTEDLY SENT A PROPOSAL TO THE GOC TO ESTABLISH A COMMISSION TO LOOK INTO PROBLEM OF THE DISAPPEARED PERSONS. HE HAS ALSO CALLED UPON NON-RELATIVES TO LEAVE THE CHURCHES IN INTEREST OF AVOIDING POLITICAL COMPLICATIONS. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STRIKERS REMAINS ABOUT 150. AT LEAST THREE HAVE BEEN HOSPITALIZED. THE EMBASSY'S DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE STRIKE (A 24 HOUR SIT-IN BY THREE WOMEN) RESOLVED WITHOUT INCIDENT HAS BEEN REPORTED BY SEPTELS. END SUMMARY.

2. CARDINAL SILVA HAS BEEN SEEKING A SOLUTION TO HUNGER STRIKE IN MEETINGS WITH INTERIOR MINISTER FERNANDEZ AND THROUGH INTER-MEDIARIES. HE REPORTEDLY SENT PROPOSAL TO GOC MAY 31 CALLING FOR SETTING UP OF HIGH LEVEL COMMISSION, INCLUDING PRIVATE CITIZENS, TO LOOK INTO PROBLEM OF THE DISAPPEARED PERSONS. CHURCH OFFICIALS ARE HOPEFUL OF A POSITIVE REPLY NO LATER THAN JUNE 2.

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3. CONCURRENTLY, MAY 31, THE ARCHBISHOPRIC OF SANTIAGO ISSUED A DECLARATION EXPLAINING ITS MEDIATING ROLE. THE DECLARATION EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR THE "JUST DEMANDS" OF THE RELATIVES OF THE DISAPPEARED, AND NOTES A FAVORABLE DISPOSITION ON THE PART OF THE GOC TO FIND A SOLUTION "IN SO FAR AS IS POSSIBLE". IT THEN GOES ON TO SAY IT WOULD BE VERY UNFORTUNATE IF THIS EFFORT BY THE CHURCH

IN SUPPORT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WERE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF FOR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES. CONSEQUENTLY, CARDINAL SILVA "DISAPPROVES" THE CONTINUED PRESENCE AMONG THE HUNGER STRIKERS IN SANTIAGO CHURCHES OF PERSONS WHO ARE NOT RELATIVES OF THE MISSING, OR THAT SUCH PERSONS SHOULD ENTER THE CHURCHES IN THE FUTURE EITHER TO SUPPORT OR OPPOSE THE HUNGER STRIKE. (COMMENT: THIS LAST THOUGHT IS A REFERENCE TO THE AFTERNOON TAKE-OVER OF THE CATHEDRAL LAST WEEK BY ABOUT 60 PRO-GOVERNMENT YOUTH). THE DECLARATION CONCLUDES WITH A PLEDGE THAT THE CHURCH WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK A SOLUTION.

4. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STRIKERS REMAINS IN THE RANGE OF 140 TO 160 -- AT THE UNICEF AND ICRC OFFICES AND IN SEVEN SANTIAGO CHURCHES AND ONE IN CONCEPCION. THERE CONTINUES TO BE PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY PARTICIPANTS (SEE SANTIAGO 4067) WITH ONE GROUP OF 21 PRIESTS REPORTEDLY CONCLUDING A THREE DAY PARTICIPATION THE AFTERNOON OF JUNE ONE. THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS THAT 31 PRISONERS AT THE SANTIAGO PENITENTIARY HAVE JOINED THE STRIKE. U.S. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION INCLUDES CAROLY LEHMANN (MARYKNOLL), MARGARET MORAN (FRANCISCAN) AND BRIGID MARY WALSH (FRANCISCAN, WHO HAS BOTH IRISH AND US CITIZENSHIP). SANTIAGO 4067 REPORTEDLY ERRONEOUSLY THE PARTICIPATION OF AN AMERICAN PRIEST.

5. THE PRESS REPORTS AND WE HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THREE OF THE FIVE PERSONS AT THE ICRC OFFICE HAVE BEEN HOSPITALIZED. THEY WENT IMMEDIATELY AND QUIETLY ON DOCTOR'S ORDERS. REPORTEDLY ONE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE CHURCHES HAS ALSO BEEN HOSPITALIZED. (OTHERS (E.G. AT UNICEF) ARE IN WEAKEND CONDITION AND MAY BE HOSPITALIZED SHORTLY.

6. OTHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDE SHOWS OF SUPPORT FOR THE HUNGER STRIKERS BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND WORKERS. APPROXIMATELY 100 STUDENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CHILE (UCH) PARADED DOWNTOWN SANTIAGO MAY 30, DISTRIBUTING PAMPHLETS DECLARING SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRIKERS. AT THE SAME TIME, A STATEMENT SAID TO HAVE BEEN SIGNED BY 324 LAW STUDENTS FROM THE UCH BLASTED THE CHILEAN JUDICIARY FOR ITS INACTION IN THE CASES OF THE DISAPPEARED, WHILE SUPPORT FOR "OUR BORTHERS (THE STRIKERS) WHO TODAY RISK THEIR LIVES IN THE AREAS OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE". A SIMILAR STATEMENT WAS PUT OUT THE SAME DAY BY 16 LABOR ORGANIZATIONS -- IN THEIR MAJORITY COMMUNIST -- BACKING THE STRIKES AND EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR THE CHURCH'S MEDIATION EFFORTS.

7. COMMENT: WHILE CHURCH AND GOC OFFICIALS REMAIN CLOSELIPPED THERE IS FRESHENING HOPE THAT A SOLUTION IS AT HAND. THE IDEA OF A SPECIAL INVESTIGATING COMMISSION SURFACED MAY 27 IN "EL MERCURIO". BASICALLY PRO-GOVERNMENT "LA SEGUNDA" NEWSPAPER AND INDEPENDENT "QUE PASA" MAGAZINE HAVE SINCE COME OUT WITH SERIOUS

EDITORIALS SAYING THAT THE GOC HAS AN OBLIGATION (PAST DUE ACCORDING TO "QUE PASA") TO DO EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO ACCOUNT FOR THE MISSING RELATIVES. "QUE PASA" REFERS TO A COMMISSION OF NOTABLES" AS ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD (BUT DO NOT HAVE CONFIRMATION) THAT RALATIVES OF THE DISAPPEARED HAVE BACKED OFF PREVIOUS DEMANDS THAT THEY BE REPRESENTED ON ANY SUCH COMMISSION LANDAU

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